

Gender, Experience and Self-Disclosure as Predictors of Stress Manifestation among Undergraduates

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Abstract— This study investigated the influence of gender, experience, and self disclosure, on stress manifestation among undergraduates. Gender(male and female) experience in school environment (1-2 and 3-4 years) and self-disclosure (able and non able) on stress manifestation .Using the stratified sampling technique, a total number of 300 (made up of 150 females and 150 males), selected across the levels of study ,representative of the faculties of Arts, Management, and Social Sciences within the ages of 21-27 years participated in this study by completing the author disclosure /stress manifestation questionnaire. The stated hypotheses were tested at 0.05.It was found that gender and experience has no significant effect, and self disclosure has significant effect on stress manifestation. The need for disclosure and social skill training was suggested as a means of presenting, enhancing and maintaining social convoy, which leads to social ties and social support, which acts as a stress buffer.

Index Terms— Experience, Gender, Self disclosure, Social skills, Stress buffer, Stress manifestation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Every day survival and living is associated with stress. Stress is a generalized and pervasive phenomenon, which has become the most important factor influencing individual efficacy and satisfaction in modern setting. Nigeria as a country characterized with high level of misery index, (i.e. a high level of inflation and unemployment). Nigerian undergraduates undergo a great deal of both perceived and actual stress of different types at varying degrees, As they cannot afford school requirements comfortably and even on graduation, anxiety of where to find monthly paid work, would have grossly occupy their thought(cognition) which in turn is manifested as stress(behaviour) which affect their behaviour, health and psychological well being, as they pass through the Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education.

There is need to draw attention to stress in undergraduate as they constitute tomorrow's leaders and workforce. Today's stress victims can be tomorrows vulnerability, a stressful situation ranges from simple annoyance to anxiety and depression, it may precipitate to serious and lasting psychopathology. Stress is known to constitute a critical factor in chronic disease e.g. ulcer, hypertension, diabetes, somatic illness, and poor wellbeing leading to school

absenteeism, poor performance leading to poor university degrees, these constitute a great concern to parents, family, school, the government and the nation in general. Attendant to this condition may result to frequent attendance at clinics and pharmacy shops, increase in consumption of anxiolytics and alcohol.

Stress in the Nigerian undergraduate seems to be common as the country is characterized by nation – induced poverty, a galloping inflation and unemployment. There is a need to review the source of stress among tertiary students. Firstly, as dependants both in school and at home, at home they constitute source of stressors to their parents and teachers, who may be experiencing burnout, the domestic stress radiates to them, secondly, as a normal developing human being, with the vicissitude of life, daily changes are stressful, having to leave the home daily, with aspirations which may not be fulfilled, the routine daily hazzles. At school, queuing for forms for completion, visiting offices and not meeting the officers, erratic and unreliable electricity. Stressed and burnout non-academic and academic officers responding to them in a dehumanized way as the characteristic of burnout. (Maslach,1982).The undergraduates is a peculiar individual who are the leaders of tomorrow and whose life rotate and depend on parents and the lecturers, there is a great need to understand them. Also, peer pressure in school in a technological advancing economy e.g. the use of GSM telephone with sophisticated gadgets.

In Nigeria. students are exposed to series of school closure in many forms,(either from academic community or students unrest) which may be total or indefinite, local and national. This closure may be long or short, depending on the cause of the industrial action. 100 percent upward review of school fees and other academic services, thus, leading to inflation of products and services in the market, implementation of electronic systems and electricity and network dependent services (internet), which is usually unreliable, menace of secret cults, population explosion leading to inadequate resources in lecture hall and library, ban of use of motor cycles in campus, thus requiring trekking a long distance, before getting to motor park, few campus vehicles (taxi) that requires struggling for a space. University rules conflicting with the ideal atmosphere in the campus, all these constitute multiple distractions depriving one of academic attention leading to poor performance and earning poor grades in courses which usually are frustrating. All these are happening in a time bound as deadline on activities in school such as payment of school fees and other levies.

The consequences of these stressors manifest in form of fear, anxieties, aggressive behaviour (externalizing) or

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emotional (internalizing) (Ezeilo 1982). Nweze (1984) asserted that most of the emotional problems encountered by students are translated in physical symptoms such as headache, insomnia and fever and the symptoms are presented as medical conditions in medical centre to medical personnel. Stress manifestation here includes worries, anger and other intense emotions.

Self disclosure has been linked with social ties, friendship which leads to social support. It has long been regarded as emotionally satisfying aspects of life, lending credence to the idea that the use of social ties lead to having social support network, as a means of coping, social ties and relationships result in social support which helps to reduce stress manifestation.

Many studies have focused on social support and social integration as a moderator of stress. Haines, Hubert and Buggs (1996), Lin, Le and Enal (1999), Bisschop, Kriegsman, Backman (2004), Erber (2005), and Pruchno and Rosenbaum (2003), Cohen, Teresi and Holmes (1985), reported that social support is linked with a reduction in symptoms of stress and stressful conditions. Stokes (1987) in his findings reported that individuals who do not avail themselves of disclosure tend to have dysfunctional relationships and experience greater loneliness than those who disclose to friends. It is based on this that this study seeks to understand among African sample, especially in undergraduates, who are the leaders of tomorrow and are undergoing tertiary education.

This study is interested in understanding the influence of gender (male and female), experience in campus (less than 2 years and above 2 years) and self disclosure (able and non able), which is the ability to reveal personal facts about oneself to others.

The act of revealing oneself is inherent in man and universal, this is because man is made a complex biosociocognitive organism, he is interactive, dependent and interdependent, the act of self disclosure leads to a reciprocal behaviour on the part of whom we disclose to. This reciprocity is done in a dyadic situation giving rise to a group, effective self disclosure binds group leading to group cohesion, thinking, performance and problem solving.

Dinidia and Allen (1992) found that gender influences self disclosure more than males. Self disclosure helps in problem solving, less stress manifestation, enhance group formation, group problem solving, intimate relationship, displaces anxiety and can lead to trust. Lack of self disclosure can lead to problems like depression, internal tension, hostility, poor problem solving and other psychological problems. Sarason, Sarason and Guring (1997) asserted that social ties also can mute the effects of stress and help an individual cope with stressful events, poor health, increases one's ability to meet health care needs.

Social support which is a product of self disclosure can help individuals of all ages cope more effectively, it can improve the physical and mental health of older adults. Social support also involve social integration, which Antonucci, Vandewater and Lansford (2000); Holtzman, Robok, Saczynski, Kouzis, Milcox and Eaton (2004); Luszcz and Giles, (2002). has found to be strong moderator in

stressful condition. Being lonely and socially isolated which can result from lack of self disclosure has also been reported to be a significant health risk factor (Rome and Kahn, 1997).

From literature reviewed effective self disclosure leads to social support and social integration which are strong stress moderators and can help to mute the effects of stressful condition on the health of the individual e.g. the undergraduate who is undergoing studies in a stressful-ridden condition. The influence of gender, experience and self disclosure has not been focused on especially among Africans, hence this study seeks to contribute to the available literature and dearth literature on African population.

This study therefore seeks to understand the effects of gender, experience, and self disclosure on stress manifestation, it therefore hypothesize that students males will report more stress than females, secondly students in 200 level will report more stress than those in 300 level and above, thirdly, students with avoidant self disclosure will report more stress than those with non avoidant self disclosure.

II. METHOD

Participant - Three hundred students (undergraduates) studying in a state university with multilingual, multicultural character within the ages of 20-27 years old, made up of 150 males and 150 females across the faculties of Art, social sciences, and management sciences were selected by stratified random sampling techniques participated in this study by responding to the authors self-disclosure and stress manifestation questionnaire.

III. INSTRUMENT

The instrument of data collection was a single instrument designed by the authors for this purpose divided into two sections for easy completion. Section one consist of the demographic variable e.g. name, sex, year and religion, these were modified as they were not necessary for this study. Section two contained a twenty item measuring self disclosure and stress manifestation each measured by ten items. Such as I enjoy discussing personal issues with a friend, share my import and values with an acquaintance, I love discussing relevance issues with a co-traveller in a bus. The Stress manifestation contains items like I feel fearful, I talk less than usual, I had sleepless nights, I can't get going. The items found to be culturally fair, from existing questionnaires were selected to make up the questionnaire.

The students were asked to evaluate how much they agrees to the statement with a 4-point likert-like scale ranging from "not at all"(1) to complete (4). The score was generated by recording the scored items either (O or V) and summing the values of all items. The reliability was established using the Cronbach alpha. A Cronbach alpha of 0.78 was obtained using a sample of 40 undergraduate population in a pilot study.

IV. PROCEDURE

The sampled selected using stratified random sampling technique were told that no punishments for not taking part and taking part is in no way associated with your studies or gaining favour from the authors. The instrument was

administered to them in a class to avoid attrition of instrument and subject; the studies responded by completing the instrument and submitted it to the researcher. 300 respondents was gathered at the end of the exercise making up the total participants.

V. RESULT

TABLE 1. Result showing differences in gender, experience, and self disclosure on stress manifestation.

Stress manifestation	N	M	SD	t	df	P
Males	150	10.82	2.34	2.84	298	<0.05
Females	15	5.77	4.05			
Experience < 200 level	150	7.66	3.32	3.03	298	<0.05
>300 level	150	11.08	1.98			
Avoidant	180	12.78	3.87	1.04	298	n.s
Non Avoidant	120	13.01	3.72			

Note n.s = not significant at 0.05

VI. DISCUSSION

This study revealed that gender, has no significant effect in stress manifestation among undergraduates. The third hypothesis revealed that females reported less stress than males. This finding supports the findings of Dinida and Allen(1992) which means gender has a strong effect in stress manifestation. Females tend to enjoy much stress buffers than males. This must be due to the fact that females are perceived to be weaker vessels and as such they attract the attention of social supports than men, even the stressed males are very likely to even support the females, again due to the nature of females they naturally attract sympathy and empathy, every one seem to cares for them, they enjoy social support more, so they are very likely not to manifest symptoms of stress.

Another factor that may have contributed is the tendency to associate with a female by the opposite sex, which usually leads to men being bearers of burden. On interaction, conversation begins with “what is the problem” In this context/culture females are expected to voice their problems and usually males are willing to add the females burden to their problems (i.e. stress level) all in the name of taking up the assumed status of a man. This finding enjoys the support of Ezeilo (1982), Uzoka (1993), that stress is pervasive.

The second hypothesis that students in higher levels of study < 300 level and above will report less stress than students in lower level was rejected as obtained value was not significant, this means level of study was not significant, i.e. experience in the campus (learning) has no implication, those in higher level did not report more stress than those in lower level, this result could be due to the optimistic state of the lower level, who irrespective of the demands are still very optimistic of making a good result in their course of interest or the course they find themselves, and as such they tune themselves against the negative effect of demands, and uses their psychological capital to avert the effect of stress. In this context psychological capital acts as stress buffers. Moreover, the older students not having much stress could be that they

may have resolved to their faith, as their expectancies are fulfilled or not fulfilled. The higher level students may also manifest low stress as they are familiar with the terrain and academic activities, and also would have build a network of friends who are socially supportive, this support which is enhancing and satisfying may lower their stress level.

The increase in stress level may have resulted from the need and awareness to make a good result, on how to write a project, who will they like to supervise them, and having to write essay examination, unlike the filling the gap which dominated the first and second years.

This study also revealed that self disclosure is a strong factor and has a significant effect in stress manifestation, it revealed that individuals with non-avoidant self disclosure report low level of stress than individual with avoidant self disclosure. This finding support the findings of Lyden, Jameson, and Holmes (1997) who reported that self disclosure shapes friendship development and maintenance leading to mutual concern for each other welfare, is an effective tool in diffusing stress and stressful situation, in times of stressful conditions and pleasure thus reducing stress manifestations. It is worthy of note that self disclosure account for our friendship and intimacy development, which leads to social ties, network and thus social support.

Good Self disclosure helps in developing friendship and intimacy. The number of friendship an individual has determine his social support and the degree of self disclosure help to maintain the social support and the manner in which he discloses self help to maintain social integration, though ineffective self disclosure has been found to be dangerous to friendship as a great deal of disclosure of personal information, there is good chance that the recipient will feel threatened with the premature rush to intimacy and will evaluate the discloser negatively (Kaplan Finestone, Degnore and More (1974).

This study also enjoys the support of social convoy model of social relations that an individual go through life embedded in a personal network of individuals from whom they give and receive social support. This social support is gained chiefly from ability to communicate moving gradually from self disclosure to superficial topics to more network exchange. As one grows and pass through life, this network of social support in times of stress and pleasure.

This finding also supports the popular adage “that a problem shared is half solved.” This means when a problem is disclosed, the solution becomes nearer. Continually, ability to self disclose is reinforced in this context of study as they have a local adage ”okokune ede gbe.” Which means: “He who keep quiet that the river kills” and “Ono re eniame he ore eniame ria egbe,” this means: “He who keeps his illness secret dies of the illness.” And it also supports a common popular way of relieving stress traced to the catholic doctrine of confession, commonly used by Pentecostals “that a closed mouth is a closed destiny.”

Self disclosure is emphasized in this culture as a problem solving strategy, this problem solving strategy helps to reduce the stress manifestation among undergraduates. Again with the Christian orientation of bearing each other burden, is another way in which self disclosures gain attention and relief,

It also reinforces the self disclosure as those we disclose to, are likely to take our problem as a burden upon themselves and support in their own way with the Bible instruction and expectation that ‘blessed is he that giveth than the one that taketh,’ any one whom you disclose to feel psychologically satisfied when giving help to.

Self disclosure as seen in this study is also part of the western culture where social expression tends to be a sign of social competence, leading to self enhancement, social survival skills which enhance self efficiency. There is a difference in self disclosure between male and female. In this cultural context, males are expected to keep quiet and bear their burden, rather than disclosing, what may be termed “be a man syndrome” the be a man culture, men are expected to maintain and bear whatever stress they are undergoing, while females are expected to disclose any stressful experience. Lack of self disclosure could be responsible for the prevalent level of coronary heart disease, leading to Coronary heart attack, Cerebral vascular accident (CVA) in males than females.

This study also finds support with the findings of Sarason, Sarason and Guning (1997), Haines, Hubert and Beggs (1996) and Lin, Ye and Ensell (1999). That social support alleviates psychological distress and that lack of it can lead to distressful periods for students with poor self disclosure.

VII. SUGGESTIONS

This finding therefore suggests that students be taught basic courses that are directed towards understanding self and self enhancement. For example social skill training (SST), assertiveness and self enhancement and presentation. Also future researchers are expected to find the role of personality and parental background as factors capable of influencing self-disclosure and stress manifestation.

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